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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the "ideolect" of the managers in the educational system in order to gain a better understanding of the selection process in which they participate and to eliminate the systemic discrimination that occurs in this context. Following the interactional sociolinguistic perspective, the functioning of statements of speakers in power positions are studied in order to understand the influence and impact of their discourse on the immediate environment. The research combines two methods: the discourse analysis approach and the content analysis approach. This combined approach is taken to establish thematic constants and linguistic markers that permit an attribution of meaning and a precise reference point to words and sentences. The research consists of a sampling of recordings of 24 interviews with male and female administrators working at 4 levels of the Quebec (Canada) educational system in the Montreal area. (JL)

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"Of manpower and words: A study of linguistic markers of inclusion and exclusion in managerial work in the educational system"¹

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1. Introduction

This exploratory study aims to identify the *idéolècte*² of the managers in the educational system so as to gain a better understanding of the selection process in which they participate and to eliminate the systemic discrimination that occurs in this context.

Following the interactional sociolinguistic perspective (Goffman 1981; Gumperz 1986), I have studied the functioning of statements of speakers in power positions, so as to understand the influence and impact of their discourse on their immediate environment. I have combined two approaches: the discourse analysis approach (Ghiglione et al 1985; Moeschler 1986) and the content analysis approach (Bardin 1989; D'Unrug 1974), in order to establish thematic constants and linguistic markers that permit an attribution of meaning and a precise reference point to words and sentences.

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²*Idéolècte* 'idéolècte': linguistic competence of a group of individuals sharing a same ideology (Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980: 183)).

In order to avoid an essentialist vision of the speech style of women or men, I have described the communication behaviour of speakers following their interactional connections, their position and their role at the time of the conversational exchange. The study of the manager's 'idealect', considered as the powerful style because it is related to a position of authority, makes it possible to define the scope of the dominant/dominated interaction in the power struggle always present in selection committees. Although the powerful style is actually identified as the 'masculine' style, it must be linked to the hierarchical position rather than to the sexual identity of the speaker. In fact, the literature on the subject reveals that the powerless style can be used by one or the other sex according to whether or not the person holds a power position at the moment of the interaction (Kramarae 1984; Preisler 1986).

2. Method

My sampling consists of recordings of twenty-four interviews with male administrators working at the four levels of the Quebec educational system in the Montreal area: primary, secondary, college and university³. These administrators were chosen on the basis of two criteria: first, they must have had teaching experience; second, they must have sat on selection committees recently. Since the objective of this study is to identify the linguistic comportment of a group of individuals placed in a comparable situation and sharing a same ideology, I have chosen to restrain my sampling to male

³Therefore classified as level 1: schoolboards of primary level; level 2: schoolboards of primary-secondary level; level 3: colleges; and level 4: universities.

administrators. Although there are not only men in managerial positions in the Quebec educational system it has been shown that they occupy the vast majority of high level positions at primary, secondary and college levels (Beaudoux, 1989: 47-105). The situation could hardly be different at the University level since women have only recently gained access to it as students, professors or department heads.

The semi-directed interviews, including a list of questions, left the participants all the time they needed to answer and the possibility of bringing out the finer points. It contained informative questions, open and closed questions, and the simulation of a job interview: twelve with male candidates and twelve with female candidates. Of the forty-one questions included, ten related to socio-demographic information, eight were closed questions and twenty-three were open questions about opinions regarding characteristics of the ideal manager, perceptions and interpretations of verbal behavior. The interviews were conducted exclusively in French⁴ and lasted on the average an hour and a half. All were conducted by myself to assure uniformity of presentation and to avoid changes in the procedure.

To locate the linguistic markers of inclusion and exclusion on the part of the speakers, I operate with the notion of modalisation which is a part of the linguistic study of speech 'linguistique de l'énonciation' (Cervoni 1987). By modalisation I mean the various verbal operations which permit speakers to signal their attitudes in their utterances, or as Saint-Pierre (1991: 224) defines it: "the way in which an individual expresses his or her attitude toward his or

⁴I assured the translation of the material into English.

her discursive contribution" [my translation]. I adopt three basic locutionary modalities: Knowledge, Obligation and Personal Preference. Saint-Pierre (1991) calls these *epistemic*, *deontic* and *appreciative* respectively. The first, Knowledge, is *epistemic* 'épistémique', and takes the form of a belief or a certainty, as in the following sentence: *This is a fundamental point*. The second, Obligation, is *deontic* 'déontique' and takes the form of moral necessity, for example: *Our personnel simply have to adopt a new attitude*. The third, Personal Preference, is *appreciative* 'appréciatif', it expresses the approval or disapproval (positive or negative, good or bad) of the speaker in relation to the utterance. Rather than a validation it takes the form of subjective evaluation, for instance: *This is the way I like to see things done* [underline added].

The study of the epistemic, deontic and appreciative modalities permits us to distinguish and to measure the degree and the strength of conviction (adhesion or exclusion) of the speakers in view of the ideas and values that they put forward. This was combined with the study of recurring key words or 'buzz words', following the content analysis approach, such as *participatory* management and *competence*. These themes play a central role in the syntax and the utterances of the speakers. They permit us to identify the relevant semantic network and deduce the ideological reference and interpretation schemas of the speakers (Maingueneau 1987).

3. Analysis and Discussion

Before studying the modalities, as they are linked to the *participatory* management and to a lesser extent to the *collegiate* and *democratic* managements associated with it, it is necessary to consider the meaning of these 'buzz words' as also the notion of *competence*.

Participatory management is linked to different types of realities following the various participant managers. According to some, it is a matter for professional training because it results from theoretical training in management. According to others, its necessity proceeds from the intermediate status of the managers. It can reflect either pressures from the outside or personal affinities. It is often connected with a sense of responsibility, and thus at variance with the attitude of *laissez-faire*⁵, with the *incapacity to reach a decision* and with *co-management*. On several occasions the speakers stress that it must be combined with a strong leadership. One of the administrators, defines *participatory* management as the involvement of all individuals at every stage of a process, directly or indirectly.

By all accounts, *participatory* management is centered on action. It is a matter of *working with*, of *taking people into account*, of *getting them involved*, of *making the most of the abilities of each and every one*. It is sometimes considered as a sign of an *open-mindedness* and of *transparency*. Despite its numerous merits, *participatory* management also entails limits: it demands structures and the gathering of individuals; it requires more time without always

⁵All the statements used in this paper reproduce authentic utterances and are translated literally from the original French version.

succeeding in reducing the gap between the needs of the different levels of authority.

Another 'buzz word' often used by the manager in the educational system jargon, is *competence*. It is referred to as an essential hiring criterion. It appears in the openings of the utterances along with markers of inclusion such as: *what is important, in the first place, it is at least necessary, it is the basic element, is a premise*, etc. In fact seventeen out of the twenty-four managers mentioned *competence* as the first hiring criterion. According to them: "a manager must know what he is talking about". As a notion in constant fluctuation, *competence* consists of many components whose absence would mean a disorder in the managerial functioning without leading to incompetence. In addition to its reference to the academic and occupational background, *competence* implies an ability to develop relationships.

The knowledge or epistemic modality, mostly used by the supporters of *participatory* management, shows us that this type of management is a matter of personal beliefs and views: *I think that this is important, What I find fundamental*, rather than a matter of obligation and necessity connected to the working relationship environment. It reveals also that its complete assimilation, and thorough integration as a value, is in accordance with the managers' interests.

Moreover, the presence of personal preference or appreciative modalities, that comes within the affective register, attests the strength of conviction of the managers about the *participatory* management: *This is the way that I manage*

and that I like to be managed, I prefer that people sit around a table to make a decision rather than decentralize (...) [underline added].

The obligation or deontic modalisation manifests itself in a toned down way when it is used by the adherents of the *participatory* management who usually favor the epistemic mode. Unlike the epistemic mode which generally opens utterances, the deontic mode uses an impersonal turn of phrase: *one must reach, it is in this direction that one tries to*, and is mostly centred on the optional rather than the compulsory. It comprises infinitive verbs: *pas de laisser-faire, to get someone to participate*. It uses attenuative turns of phrase: *theoretically, I say theoretically they should* and is expressed as a constative descriptive speech act⁶, that is to say, an utterance presented as the result of a diagnosis or an identification implying an objective observation (Saint-Pierre 1984): *If a secretary who works hard all day, doesn't know why she's working and is only trying to please her boss, as far as I'm concerned, she isn't working for an organization.*

The deontic mode is used in a very affirmative way by those managers who prefer it to the epistemic mode. In spite of an impersonal turn of phrase, the numerous repetitions of modal verbs such as: *it has to* with the contextualization 'mise en situation', for example: *you must, you need to, you have to*, reinforce the interlocutor's feeling of being under an obligation. Moreover the presence of emphatic turn of phrase as in the next example: *Sometimes, we cannot say that*

⁶Constative descriptive speech act are a form of constative which are speech acts that express the belief of Speaker (**S**) that Proposition (**P**) is true or false. The constative speech acts simply express the belief of **S**. (Saint-Pierre 1984).

being participatory is universally good [underline added], contributes to accentuate the strike force of the utterance.

The choice of the epistemic mode from the part of the administrators of levels 1 and 2 shows a thorough integration of *participatory* management as a value. The use of the deontic mode by the managers of the fourth level points out that they were more sensitive to the influence of external pressures such as the organizational context and the institutional needs.

Although epistemic and deontic modes can coexist they are realized in a complementary distribution within the framework of this research. It is the epistemic mode that characterizes the speech style and vocabulary of the administrators of levels 1 and 2. Not as unanimous as the *participatory* management followers, the managers of level 3 and most of all those of level 4 preferred the deontic mode: a fact that is not without impact on the utterance.

The Table shows us the preference for the epistemic mode, based on Knowledge, on the part of the managers of levels 1 and 2 (11 out of 12) and the preference for deontic modalisation, based on Obligation, on the part of all the managers of level 4. We can therefore talk of an epistemic 'idealect' for the former group, and of a deontic 'idealect' for the latter. Although the managers of level 3 were mostly users of the epistemic mode, their answers were too diversified to permit any generalization of this kind at this point of the research.

Table: Type of modalisation following institution level and the preferred type of administration.

Type of Administration:					Total
	Participatory	Collegiate	Democratic	Others	
Type of modalisation:					
	Epist./Deont	Epist./Deont.	Epist./Deont.	Epist./Deont.	
Level:					
1	5/0		0/1		6
2	6/0				6
3	2/1		0/1	0/2	6
4	0/2	0/3	0/1		6
Total	13/3	0/3	0/3	0/2	24

The *collegiate* management is exclusively chosen by half of the managers from level 4 under the deontic form. *Collegiate* management is based on consensus, participation, consultation and communication. As the administrators who recommended *participatory* management, the managers who support *collegiate* management warn against co-management and insist on the necessity of making decisions and taking responsibility. Consequently, it presents affinities with the *participatory* management. This similarity permits us to isolate constants for the managers at university level and to characterize their speech style as a deontic 'idealect' related to the organizational structure.

The *democratic* type of management finds followers among administrators of levels 1, 3 and 4. It is mostly formulated under the deontic form. Although the limited corpus on the subject restricts considerably the analysis and any

generalization on its account, it seems that this type of management is viewed as more authoritarian. Nevertheless it is still very similar in its content to the *participatory* management style as the next statement will corroborate.

(...) the university is an extremely conservative organism, any change is almost impossible and consequently *you must* achieve a consensus management. When you have a project that has obtained such a consensus and the participation of the university community, it can move ahead [italics added]

The values associated with each of these three types of management are similar and could be considered as a continuum. This would prevent them from being linked exclusively to one type of modality. Only the *participative* management because of the important proportion of its followers (relatively to the whole corpus) and of their unanimous use of the epistemic mode can authorize such a generalization. However, the analysis of this corpus shows the presence of a polarization in the 'idealect' of the managers. It shows that their use of modality is more attributable to their membership than to the values they adhere to, or claim to. This is confirmed by the managers of the fourth level: whatever values are put forward by them, the deontic mode, centered on the sense of duty and, more precisely here, on the mission of the organization, is the only one they use. By extension, the choice of the type of modalisation could serve as an indicator of the utterance speech style as well as the content advocated in this sector of activities.

When we look at the question of retention or dismissal of an employee showing incompetence (in the simulation of a problematic case), personal pronouns and 'institutional' or formal style pronouns are in complementary

distribution. The use of institutional *one*, *we* and *it* ('it' with impersonal verb) is predominant among the managers in favor of dismissal who use them three times more frequently than their colleagues who prefer retention of the employee. The latter use the personal pronoun *I* three times more often than the ones in favour of dismissal. The dismissal is coupled with distant relationship with the employee (use of institutional pronouns) along with self-disclosure (personal experiences or examples) as a means of objectifying their position. The private nature of these revelations is therefore diminished on account of the pseudo-objective environment in which they are inscribed.

Although the epistemic (Knowledge) and deontic (Obligation) modalisations are realized in a complementary way concerning certain concepts and values presented in this research, the appreciative modality (decrease or reinforcement) turns up randomly in epistemic or deontic utterances. Linguistic markers of inclusion (identity, adhesion) and of exclusion (otherness, rejection) are used with the three types of modalities and permit us to identify the attitudes of the speaker in his utterance.

Attitude of the speaker may be indicated by the use of key words, frequency of mention, or indeed absence of mention altogether. Markers of inclusion and exclusion allow us to track down signs of the subjectivity of the speaker in his utterance. These markers are therefore signaled at the semantic level by the choice of certain words such as adjectives, adverbs, nouns but also by function words, turn of phrase, choice of verbal mode and tense at the morpho-syntactic level. This study made it possible to list the following markers of the key-words: *participatory* management and *competence*

Markers of inclusion:

- personal pronoun (subject): *I*;
- topicalization: *In my opinion, I find it important*;
- contextualization 'mise en situation': *You must, you need to*;
- constative assertive speech act⁷: *I think, I believe*;
- affirmative and emphatic turn of phrase: *Sometimes, we cannot say that being participatory is universally good*;
- present tense;
- modal verbs: *It must be taken in consideration, One has to*;
- adverbs: *ideally, absolutely, really*;
- possessive adjectives: *our circle*;
- 'strong' adjectives: *fundamental, essential, important*;
- 'positive' hierarchical nouns: *premise*;
- metaphorical deictics: *here, today, But today I think these problems are solved*

Markers of exclusion:

- institutional pronouns (subject): *one, it* ('it' with impersonal verb);
- impersonal turn of phrase: *It is in this direction that we (...)*
- negative, euphemistic and attenuative turn of phrase: *It is not reasonable, I would not be inclined to make him a manager, theoretically, I say theoretically they should (...)*
- future tense and conditional mode: *he will have, he would have*

⁷In the constative assertive speech acts, a form of constative, the belief of **S** that **P** is represented as an irrefutable fact (Saint-Pierre 1984).

- infinitive verbs: *to get someone to participate* 'faire participer'
- constative descriptive speech act: *If a secretary who works hard all day, doesn't know why she's working and is only trying to please her boss, as far as I'm concerned, she isn't working for an organization;*
- negative nouns: *handicap, problem,*
- mitigative adjective: *It's unfortunate,*
- demonstrative adjective: *This is, that*

4 Conclusion

This study is exploratory and nonexperimental because the speakers were chosen following predetermined criteria. The confidentiality of the hiring process makes it impossible to observe directly the utterances in the hiring committee context. Nevertheless, the length as well as the diversity of the way in which the interviews were conducted has supplied precious information about the speech pattern of each of the participating managers 'idiolect'. Even more interesting was the fact that the grouping together and the cross-checking of the results informs us about the nature and the content of the collective speech pattern of the managers in the educational system, in short of their 'idealect'.

The combination of the study of modalities with the study of key words facilitates the establishment of an inventory of 'taxèmes'⁸ connected to a precise

⁸Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1986: 21) defines 'taxème' as "the entire verbal and paraverbal facts that can be considered as position givers or indicators"[my translation].

'idealect'. It aims to identify the functional link between the communication process and the social representations that occur in it.

The setting-up of a modality pattern (order establishment and calculation of its illocutionary force) is premature at this stage of the research. Nevertheless this study shows us that the membership and the value put forward are influential factors when we consider the usage of modality. I have mentioned how the epistemic and deontic modes characterize the speech of certain managers. Also how epistemic and deontic modalisation (supported by the appreciative modality) were seen to be in complementary distribution showing the different ways the managers could express their adhesion to, or their rejection of, certain types of persons, values or ideas.

Among the markers of inclusion, I have listed the personal pronoun, *I*, sometimes topicalized, opposed to the 'institutional' pronouns *we*, *one* 'on' exclusive and *it* 'il' impersonal, expressing exclusion and disapproval. The affirmative turn of phrase, the use of the present tense and of the assertive form, also express acceptance, while the negative and sometimes euphemistic turn of phrase, the presence of the future tense or of the infinitive and conditional modes along with the use of descriptive speech acts, allows them to express reservation. The presence in the utterance of certain adjectives, adverbs and nouns, the use of appreciative verbs ("I like") and also contextualization, allows the administrators to signal their approval or disapproval. The placing of these elements at the beginning of the utterance adds to their force.

Personally I agree with Cervoni (1987: 78) that an empirical approach of this kind is required in the case of modality and of content analysis because of

the absence of overt distinctive formal characteristics. We have to invent a procedure for each situation and proceed from an idea to a provisional definition and then see how it appears in the discourse.

My research is related to the question of women's access to managerial jobs in the educational system. After noticing opposite interpretations and evaluations on the part of managers of identical simulations of female and male candidates, I have looked for the functional links between the opinions they expressed and their expectations and evaluations. It is clear that linguistic characteristics are not invariable properties, nor are they attributable to one sex rather than another. On the contrary, they are the expressions of situations or relations linked to group dynamics. As D'Unrug says:

We think that opinions, attitudes and representations are the preexistent content of speech acts which are then translated into transparent or semi-transparent utterances. It turns out that in reality, discourse must be viewed as an ongoing process of elaboration. (1974: 229) [my translation]

The study of how power is 'spoken' that is to say, how it presents itself in the language helps us to a better understanding of how it is 'thought', of how it is represented in our symbolic system (Aubert et al, 1986).

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